

W r e s t l i n g

P e r s p e c t i v e

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Four Years Of Fun In The Sun

This issue marks a very special milestone for Wrestling Perspective; the completion of four years of publishing. It started in February, 1990, as the ambitious dream of two friends from college and has evolved into one of the longest running wrestling newsletters today. We've gone through a lot of changes, but we've stayed true to our goal: to provide insight from a different perspective about wrestling, our mutual love. Wrestling brought us together, and in many ways, has kept us together for the past four years.

It wasn't long after we were first exposed to the wrestling underground that we decided to become active members. It began with writing letters to various underground sheets, ordering Japanese wrestling tapes and subscribing to anything under the sun. A few months later, we put together the blue print for a newsletter we decided to call Wrestling Perspective. In the past four years, we've had our ups and downs, but just when we're feeling a little down, something great happens with the newsletter. This year alone, we were privileged to interview some of the most important and interesting people in the wrestling business; including Jim Cornette, Bobby Eaton and Stan Lane. We also tackled several important subjects, such as the history of the stereotype, why Vader is overrated, how WCW could succeed, the Vince McMahon steroid scandal, and the ever increasingly dangerous practice of blading. During the past year, we also added the much lauded Bill "Potsnot" Kunkel to our staff, which already included wrestling's foremost historian, The Phantom Of The Ring, and long-time wrestling fan, Michael McGowen.

We'd like to thank our fellow newsletter publishers who have given their support and advice to us. We'd like to thank our current staff of writers, The Phantom Of The Ring, Bill "Potsnot" Kunkel and Michael McGowen, who are among the most talented, creative and thought-provoking writers in any wrestling publication today, bar none. We'd like to thank the wrestlers who have taken the time to give us interviews that have enhanced this publication. We'd like to thank the many contributors over the years who have sent us articles and letters for publication. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we'd like to thank you, our readers, for your support over the past four years, for without you, we'd be writing for ourselves. As we have for the past three years, we, along with Kunkel and McGowen, have listed our top choices for 1993 in 12 categories we believe to be important to wrestling and later in this issues, the Phantom give out his famous "Phannie" awards. Peace.

Wrestler Of The Year

David - Bret Hart. The Hitman had a banner year, proving hardcores correct that he is among the best in the business. The was the year Hart broke away from the rest of the pack and really stood out as the WWF's top performer, most notably during his feuds with Jerry Lawler and Shawn Michaels. Finishing second is Michaels, who also showed why he has been considered one of the best workers in the business for years. In third is Ricky Steamboat, who is the most consistent wrestler year after year. Steamboat spent the entire year in title matches, and his workrate showed why he deserved to be there.

Michael - Ric Flair. Picking Flair is automatic. Sure he's in the twilight of his career, and Dusty Rhodes used and abused him once again, but Flair is still the standard by which others are measured. The feud with the Hollywood Blondes was one of the best of the year, and something I'll cherish and enjoy as the years pass by. The greatest of our era. Bret Hart, who is second, is the one WWF wrestler I can rely on for good wrestling matches, although the stable of good workers there is becoming impressive. His match with Mr. Perfect during the King of the Ring tournament is testament enough to his talent. If only he hadn't spent so many years performing for McMahon while the circus tent was still pitched. I know I'm going to suffer much abuse from Paul and Dave for picking Vader as my third place pick, but the guy just busted his butt this year. Look at the great matches he had with Sting, Cactus Jack, Flair and even Davey Boy Smith. Vader had his working boots on so many times this year that I would have placed him first if not for the trail of broken bones and bodies he left behind. Minus two spots for Joe Thurman alone, but damn if that moonsault wasn't awe-inspiring!

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Bill - The best wrestler of the year was almost certainly Japanese, but this category means more than wrestling skill and any wrestling where they don't do interviews in a language I can understand doesn't rate consideration. Besides, the Dave Meister told us who the best Japanese wrestlers were. In no particular order, therefore: Vader. Sure they took the "Big" and the "Van" away, but that way he sounds less like Darth's smaller, less-scary brother. Watts' decision to have him put Simmons over makes you wonder what he was thinking that particular day, but the subsequent regimes have restored Loopy Leon to his full-blown, powerheel persona. Best of all, the loss to Flair did nothing to dim his luster. He had several of the year's best PPV matches, and he seems like just about the only guy in wrestling who still scares people. Then there's Bret Hart. Titan should of kept him champion, but they had to blow it. Still a lot more over than Luger, who is just a bust and if Vince McMahon isn't getting ready to recalibrate the idea of spawning a generation of Little Lugeroids, he should be. A first-rate wrestler, he worked hard and would've been the best medicine to recreating the face of the post-Hogan WWF. Finally, Stan Hansen. I know I said I wouldn't count Japanese wrestlers and Hansen works almost exclusively in Japan, but I can almost understand him, and he works his cahonas off every match I've seen him in - and I've seen at least a dozen.

Paul - Ric Flair. No, this wasn't Flair's best year, far from it, but Flair did what Sugar Ray Leonard called stealing rounds. He made a good impression during the first part of 1993, appeared stale throughout the middle, and then gave the performance of a lifetime at the end with Starrcade '93. He may be past his prime, but time has yet to pass him by. Shawn Michaels gets the second spot for his consistent performance combined with a gimmick that genuinely generates heat, even though he lost something without Sensational Sherri at his side. Rounding out the top three is Ricky Steamboat, who is probably the most

technically gifted wrestler today. Always a strong performer, even when the booking holds him back, Steamboat is a consummate professional who exudes class.

Tag Team Of The Year

David - Hollywood Blondes. Steve Austin and Brian Pillman could have been to the nineties what the Midnight Express were to the eighties. Whether it was a match or an interview, the Blondes were the most consistent talent in wrestling during 1993. Who can ever forget the Flair for the Gold segment where the pair put down Ric Flair and Arn Anderson? It's a shame, but typical WCW that they were broken up. Finishing second is the Heavenly Bodies, which did not miss a step with Stan Lane out and Jimmy Del Rey in. During the summer, Brian Hildebrand (shameless name dropping) said the Bodies would be the best tag team by the end of the years. Without the Blondes, they were. In third is the Rock and Roll Express, who proved many wrestling critics wrong in 1993. Not only can they still work, but they can still work well.

Michael - Hollywood Blondes. Pillman and Austin took an old gimmick and breathed new life into it. They melded their considerable individual talents into a cohesive unit that offended everyone and had some great matches, with the highlight being the feud with Flair and Anderson. The Heavenly Bodies II get second, as they were not quite as good as the original Heavenly Bodies. Pritchard and Del Rey are much better than the majority of tag teams out there and Del Rey brings high flying moves that Stan Lane couldn't or wouldn't do. In third place are the Quebecers who are damn entertaining. I cringe every time I see Pierre come off the top rope onto some hapless opponent. Not bad for a wrestler his size.

Bill - Various combinations of Ted DiBiase, Stan Hansen, Terry Gordy and Dr. Death and then there's the Hollywood Blondes. Paul - Hollywood Blondes. When you

combine great wrestling with entertaining interviews and heel personas that actually generated heat in 1993 is there really another choice? Not after Brian Pillman dressed up like a geriatric Flair. In second are the Heavenly Bodies, who, while better from a total entertainment standpoint with Lane, showed up the other tag teams in the WWF during the last quarter of 1993. They are solid and deserve their spot even if Del Rey doesn't look credible next to the modern day monsters. Third place goes to the forgotten team of Ricky Steamboat and Shane Douglas who were tremendous when they were together this year. Honorable mention goes to Inoue and Inoue. I didn't see enough to place them, but what I saw tells me they are good enough to break into the top three.

Most Improved Wrestler Of The Year

David - Marcus Bagwell. Bagwell isn't at the level of Too Cold Scorpio, but his improvement in the ring was remarkable. Bagwell showed he was more than just a pretty boy and has great potential to be a major superstar in the future. What can you say about the man who places second, Scorpio? He just keeps getting better and better every time he steps into the ring. He is the future of this business. In third is Razor Ramon. His work only improved slightly, but his persona got a major upgrade in 1993.

Michael - 1-2-3 Kid. Sean Waltman has always shown the talent and potential to be one of wrestling's top stars, but the opportunity to work full-time has really made the difference. He's making tremendous progress in polishing his ring skills. The Jushin Liger of America? Maybe, if McMahon would start a light heavyweight division. Steve Austin gets second place as he really came into his own this year as one half of the Hollywood Blondes. The potential has always been there, but he was lost the wilderness of the USWA, or hidden by the form of Lady Blossom, or buried in the mid-card. Now a

singles wrestler again, Austin has the chance to shine and fulfill his prophecy as the next Ric Flair. Regardless of who his father is, Dustin Rhodes gets third. He isn't quite as charismatic as the American Dream, but he carries himself well in and out of the ring. He's earning the right to be at the top and WCW could have quite a pair of stars in Rhodes and Austin. That is if WCW can keep both of them and stay in business.

Bill - 1-2-3 Kid. What can I say? He went from being a local phenomenon to a legit star. He's so different, so wild, one almost hopes McMahon can stay out of the stir to see what he'd do with him. Almost. In second place is Shawn Michaels who went from being one of the best tag wrestlers in the world to one of the best singles. That isn't easy. So I'm impressed. Okay? Ludwig Borga comes in third. This guy was unwatchable as The Viking and Tony Halme, but this new act seems to really suit him; a good impression of an old-fashioned heel. Hey, if you can get over as an anti-American from Finland, man, a cure for cancer should be an afternoon's work.

Paul - Marcus Bagwell. From the stiff pretty boy to the progressing wrestler, Bagwell is showing commitment to the business rarely found in someone with his experience. He has a bright future if he continues to learn and grow. However, every time I see him attempt to dance, I realize he does have his limitations. Second place goes to always improving Steve Austin. This guy just doesn't stop. Each time he enters the ring he is more fluid than before. Impressive. Rounding out the top three is Too Cold Scorpio who went from gymnast to wrestler in 1993. He should go far.

Most Deteriorated Wrestler Of The Year

David - Curt Hennig. It certainly looks like Mr. Perfect came back too early from his back injury. Once among the best, Hennig looked lethargic and uninterested in the ring in 1993. It's hard to believe that

Bastion Booger and Owen Hart, who finish second and third respectively, used to put on wrestling clinics in Calgary a few years ago. Booger's work became unwatchable while the Shadow showed little in 1993.

Michael - Owen Hart. Remember when Hart was one of the five best wrestlers in the world and was having all those fantastic matches in Japan? Now he "ain't nothin' special" at all and impresses me as someone sleepwalking through matches. Hopefully, and the signs are there, he will return to those glory days of just a few years ago. Rusty from a lack of ringwork, Randy Savage gets second place as he goes through the motions these days. Savage, once the most exciting wrestlers around, is stale, and one of these days, that "Oh Yeah" is going to make me puke. Rick Rude gets third as he isn't close to the form he exhibited during his first year with WCW. Of course Rude has been stuck in a rut not of his own doing. Few quality opponents and a poorly executed feud with Ric Flair probably didn't give him the incentive he needed.

Bill - Jimmy Snuka. This was pitiful. Somebody should throw this human wreckage out a hotel window. Second place goes to Ric Flair. The years are really showing. Once he re-unites the NWA and WCW belts he should lose to Vader. He's washed up; they can get maybe another two years marketing him as a legend, but not at the top. Iron Mike Sharpe comes in third. They must've hired this guy to work against main eventers as punishment. Mike, we don't care if you can run up the Washington Monument carrying a full pack, you can not wrestle anymore! Please!

Paul - Randy Savage. While his deterioration began in 1992, in 1993 Savage showed he is but a shell of his former self. Once, along with Riki Choshu, the Reggie Jackson of the wrestling world, Savage no longer performs; even when the lights are on. Owen Hart gets second place. Yes he was pretty boring in 1992, but in 1993 he commanded the fast forward button. While

some think his feud with brother Bret may revitalize him, I am skeptical. Laziness is not a disease easily cured; just ask Rick Steiner. I always thought my third place pick, Curt Hennig was overrated, but he went from competent to lethargic. His babyface personality was terrible and his matches showed little.

Most Underrated Wrestler Of The Year

David - Bobby Eaton. Day in and day out, Eaton gives his all in the ring, yet has been delegated to doing jobs for stiffers. Fans love to watch Eaton in the ring, even in losing efforts. Why has WCW ignored the success Eaton achieved when he had a push? Rounding out the top three are Terry Taylor and Brad Armstrong. Every year these three talented athletes finish high in this category. If that's not a testimony to what this business has become, I don't know what is.

Michael - Too Cold Scorpio. With his obvious charisma and spectacular aerial skills, why isn't Scorpio getting a major push? Probably because he worked for WCW where little ever makes sense. Wouldn't you just love to see the 1-2-3 Kid and Scorpio in the ring together? In second place is Marty Janetty, who was a tag team wrestler for so long in the WWF that most people just haven't had the opportunity to see him shine as a single. He was one of the bigger stars in the old Central States promotion where he was involved in a big feud with Bulldog Bob Brown. Not the stereotypical pretty boy, he has decent aerial skills, and is one of the better workers around. Brad Armstrong gets third as his lack of recognition is one of my pet peeves. Armstrong's technical skills are beyond question, and he probably would have been a major star if he was older and had the chance to work for Sam Muchnick.

Bill - Lord Steven Regal. I think he's finally getting over among hardcores, since I'm told Meltzer likes him. Great worker, great act, and the best mat-based chain

wrestler I've seen in years. Barry Horowitz gets second place. Pat yourself on the back for me, Barry: The King of the Jobbers.

Paul - Bobby Eaton. This year Bobby Eaton supplants Brad Armstrong as king of the underrated. In 1993, Eaton was relegated to Armstrong status, instead of being pushed to the top where he belongs. In 1990, I became convinced the Eaton could become a credible and marketable world's champion. I stand by that assessment today, as Eaton is still one of the most talented workers in the world. In second place is Armstrong whose status as designated jobber is nothing short of a disgrace. For years this man has been a talented wrestler with the ability to be a top draw. The fact that he hasn't been pushed in that direction merely reaffirms the suspected incompetence of the modern day promoters. Coming in third is Terry Taylor for executing fantastic wrestling while his career itself is slowly being executed.

Most Overrated Wrestler Of The Year

David - Vader. This is a rather easy one. For the third straight year I'm choosing Vader for this award in a landslide. He's praised as a great worker, but all he does is brutalize his opponents. Madusa finishes second. She's supposed to be the saving grace of women's wrestling? She appears awkward in the ring and her moves, while stiff perhaps, look ineffectual. In third is Scott Norton. Here's a guy who couldn't work in the United States and supposedly became a great wrestler in Japan. He comes back here and to me, nothing changed. He's still a stiff who can't work. It reminds me of the press Vader and Stan Hansen get.

Michael - Sid Vicious. Remember the old Hulk Hogan Rock n' Wrestling cartoon? Vicious as a wrestler is little more than a living, breathing, flesh and blood cartoon character. He is a perfect example of what has been wrong with wrestling for the past seven years. A complete waste of good

chemicals. Yokozuna gets second place as McMahon went from a big, blonde champion who exhibited little wrestling skill to a big, fat champion who's big move is sitting on his opponents. Need I say more? In third place is Davey Boy Smith, who is not the same wrestler I watched on tapes from Japan recorded in the early eighties. Today's version gets by on his name recognition alone. Very, very sad.

Bill - Lex Luger. What can I say? Short of Erik Watts, has it ever been so painfully obvious that a pushed star isn't over? Second goes to Scott Steiner. What happened to this guy? Or were we overrating him to begin with? Ric Flair captures third place. See above. The poor guy can't even take straight bumps anymore.

Paul - Lex Luger. Once a capable wrestler who honestly looked like he could carry the torch, he has turned into another stiff muscle bound pretty boy, who can't do an interview, and while every time I've seen him live he's been over, he doesn't merit what will be his destiny: a world championship. My second place pick, is Vader. Let me bust open Davey Boy Smith, Sting and Cactus Jack the hard way, and I guarantee you people will think I'm a great wrestler too. Bret Hart gets the number three position. While Hart may be capable, to listen to him talk, you would think he is a combination of Lou Thesz, Jushin Liger, Ricky Steamboat and Jumbo Tsuruta with the combined charisma of Hulk Hogan, Sid Vicious and Sting. While not really overrated by the fans, he has overrated himself. Given his box office receipts as WWF Champion, that's pretty laughable.

Best Orator Of the Year

David - Jim Cornette. The best argument I can use for picking Cornette for this honor is he was hired by the largest wrestling promotion in the country for the sole purpose of being the mouthpiece for their heavyweight champion. Sometimes outspoken and always insightful, Cornette

is the best interview in wrestling. Ric Flair finishes second mostly for his incredible interviews leading up to the Starrcade bout. In third place is Lord Steven Regal, who mastered the snob style interviews. Among his great moments were his description of Todd Champion, how he treats Sir William and his facial expressions.

Michael - Jim Cornette. Simply put, Cornette is the standard by which any wrestling interview or monologue should be judged. He is in a class all of his own. Second place goes to Arn Anderson as he does the most believable and intense interviews of any wrestler alive. Tapes of his interviews should be required viewing at any wrestling training center. A great deal of third place finisher, Ric Flair's interviews are cliché ridden, but he can deliver some of the most intense interviews, especially the ones when he seems almost maniacal that rival those of Anderson.

Bill - Jerry Lawler. We probably didn't get to hear his best work — I presume that was reserved for a Memphis courtroom — but he was phenomenal on Raw. And he had the line of the year while verbally abusing Stu Hart: "You're so old that when you were young, the dead sea was only sick!" That still cracks me up. Jim Cornette is second. He was hidden in the Smoky Mountains most of the year, but he saved yoko zooma's massive butt by taking over the mic chores from the incredibly useless Mr. Fuji. Third place goes to Jeff "Double J" Jarrett. His WWF video segments were the guilty pleasures of wrestling fans everywhere. And bring back Ronnie Gossett!

Paul - Jim Cornette. Another stellar year for the most talented mouthpiece in wrestling. Entertaining, and often humorous, Cornette's interviews always accomplish their primary objective: they generate heat. I have to give second place to Jerry Lawler, who I really found annoying at the beginning of 1993. As the year progressed and he adapted to the WWF, he became the most hated heel in the business

through his mouth and little else. Jody "The Assassin" Hamilton gets third place as each one of his interviews had a purpose. He didn't waste his time with flashy phrases, or poses. Instead he gave a demonstration in public speaking as he credibly reestablished an issue between himself and Dusty Rhodes by constantly addressing it in a serious fashion. While many will argue the merit of an Assassin/Rhodes feud, few can deny that through well-constructed and well-delivered interviews - all of which had an introduction, main point and a conclusion - the Assassin established the need to have the issue resolved. The Assassin, after spending years away from the microphone, came back and showed the young lions how it's done. Compare his interviews to those of any wrestler who has entered the business within the last five years and see if you don't agree.

Match Of The Year

David - Steve Austin versus Brian Pillman, November 10, 1993. Austin and Pillman showed during this match that not only were they a great tag team, but they could put on a one-on-one clinic. In second place, Ric Flair versus Curt Hennig from Monday Night Raw. It was Hennig's only good match in 1993 and Flair's last with the WWF. It had intensity, drama and non-stop action. My question is what happened to Hennig? 1-2-3 Kid and Razor Ramon' first match from Monday Night Raw finishes third. Technically this was not a very good match, but it was just so exciting and a shock. This match restored my faith in wrestling and made me a life-long fan of Raw.

Michael - Dynamite Kanai & Mayumi Ozaki versus Manami Toyota and Tohiyo Yamada from Dream Slam II, April 11, 1993. If you didn't see this match, do yourself a favor and get a copy of the tape as soon as possible. This is a perfect example of why so many consider All Japan Women the best wrestlers on God's green Earth. Fast paced, stiff, and dramatic

from beginning to end; just simply incredible! If we had matches of this caliber in the U.S. on a regular basis, the business might not be in such trouble. Vader vs. Cactus Jack from Halloween Havoc gets second place. What a brutal, brutal match. This one would make Illinois Senator Paul Simon faint of heart and keep any wrestling fan on the edge of his seat. Except for the ending, for which Rhodes should be drawn and quartered, this was a hot, dramatic match. I'm not sure which was more brutal, Vader vs. Cactus or my third place pick: Akira Hokuto vs. Shinobu Kandori from Dream Slam I. This was one of the bloodiest matches I've ever seen and that includes the Sheik's matches from the early seventies. Both women pulled off some spectacular moves, beat each other bloody and did so for 30 minutes. An awe inspiring match.

Bill - C'mon, I know there was one. I just can't think...

Paul - Kyoko Inoue & Takako Inoue vs. Cutie Suzuki & Mayumi Ozaki from Dream Slam I, April 2, 1993. Picture four attractive women wrestling in a match that includes speed, high flying, demonstrations of strength and stamina, drama, and stiff, but not brutal work and you have an idea of what this match was like. I just found myself really enjoying this match more so than any other in 1993. In second place Steve Williams vs. Kenta Kobashi from 8/31/93. When I started watching this match, I thought it was overrated. While the work was good, it didn't warrant match of the year hype. But the match kept building, both emotionally and physically. 10 minutes in I found myself really enjoying the match. By the 20 minute mark the match had passed my litmus test for greatness: I didn't want to see it end. By the time it reached it's conclusion I said to myself with a smile, "This is great." It was. For third place, I'll take Chigusa Nagayo vs. Devil Masami, also from Dream Slam I. This match wasn't as fast paced as some of the other All Japan Women's matches I've seen, but the combination of very

good ring work and tremendous psychology was outstanding. Every time Nagayo kicked out, the crowd went crazy, and Masami's facial expressions were better than Arn Anderson on his best day. A very underrated match. Ric Flair vs. Vader from Starrcade gets an honorable mention. I admit it, I'm a sucker for great psychology and this match was loaded with it. Much like Randy Savage vs. The Ultimate Warrior from 1991, this match wasn't just wrestling, it was a combination of booking, pre-match hype, solid wrestling, drama and a legitimately touching post-match presentation. While not the caliber of some of his greatest matches, Flair's one man show will always be remembered fondly by many.

Announcer Of The Year

David - Vince McMahon. Even with all the outside problems - and there were many of them - McMahon was by far the best announcer in wrestling. Bobby Heenan, who finishes second, also had an outstanding year. His commentary was always funny and current and his insight into wrestling and the world on the ball. Tony Schiavone, who at times is very good, and others almost unbearable, finishes third.

Michael - Jim Ross. I still am not used to Ross working WWF broadcasts, but his calls are still among the best in the business. Considering the past history of the WWF, I was pleasantly surprised the McMahon allowed Ross to be himself. Although saddened by Ross' departure from WCW, I was glad to see my second place pick, Tony Schiavone get his chance to shine again. If anyone is on par with Ross, Schiavone is the one. I never thought I would consider third place finisher Vince McMahon one of the best announcers in wrestling. Actually, and I'm going back 15 years, McMahon can call a match with the best of them, few can match him in getting angles over the audience and find me an announcer with better facial expressions during a wrestler's interview.

Bill - It was Bobby Heenan, Bobby Heenan, and Bobby Heenan. With an honorable mention to a more laid-back Jesse Ventura. By the way, if WCW keeps Jesse (which I gather they will), it will have the strongest announcing corps (remember Chris Cruise is back) in the history of the business. Jim Ross had a terrible year, but I bet he made a lot of money — and will someone please tell him that “erstwhile” means former. He seems to think it means “distinguished” or something and constantly applies it to current managers, etc.

Paul - Akira Fukuzawa. Fukazawa, Ichiban. Dr. Alphoso Morales es dos. Tres es Hugo Savonovich (Spanish version only). Savonovich, when he doesn't lower himself to speaking English has one of the most talented mouths in the game. Just ask Wendi Richter. Okay, okay here are my real picks: Vince McMahon. In 1993, something inspired McMahon to become the best play-by-play man in the game. After many years occasionally flashing brilliance here and there, but always blown away by Gordon Solie, Bob Caudle and Tony Schiavone, McMahon finally elevated his performance and proved his announcing was worthy of respect. Gene Okerlund gets second place, as though he isn't a pure announcer, his interviews and reactions are the best in wrestling. A master showman and pitchman. Tony Schiavone's performance was erratic in 1993, but good enough to place him in the top three. As for Jim Ross, isn't it interesting that Ross called the first Wrestlemania that looked minor league?

Rookie Of The Year

David - Smoking Gunns. As far as rookies go, 1993 was a lousy year for single competitors and pretty good for tag teams. The Gunns have a lot of promise and work well together. Finishing second is the Cole Twins, who are still very green, but are decent with a great look and appeal. Men on a Mission is third. no, they can't work well, but they sure do get a big op from the crowd.

Michael - I have to beg off this one because I didn't see anyone who grabbed my attention that I knew to be a rookie.

Bill - Duh, I don't know... Yoshi Kwan? But seriously, folks... it's tough to know what qualifies as a rookie in these days. Is Jarrett a rookie? He's never worked in a major promotion.

Paul - Jun Akiyama. I haven't seen a rookie look this good since Steve Austin. Smoking Gunns are second. They show some promise, get a good reaction and just might go somewhere. Third place goes to the Cole Twins. Again, they show some promise and appear to have a good attitude.

Manager Of The Year

David - Jim Cornette. Cornette's a busy guy, but everything he did in 1993, he did very well and managing was no exception. He can get crowd heat for his talent, and is the best mouthpiece in wrestling. Col. Robert Parker, who is one of the most versatile performers in wrestling, finishes second. The Southern accent and the cigars crack me up every time I see him. In third is Paul Bearer for facial expressions and voice alone.

Michael - Jim Cornette. What other manager could possibly get himself over in three different promotions. From his ringside work to his matchless oration, Cornette is the standard for the manager of the modern era. Being the standard in two areas of professional wrestling presentation is something he ably carries. Tammy Fytch gets second as she has created the character Alexandra York should have been. She comes across as an intelligent woman who knows what she wants, demands respect and doesn't let ethics get in her way. Defiantly not the usual bimbo valet. In third is Johnny Polo. Not only a talented wrestler, but also hilarious and quick-witted. Give Polo time to develop further and he may just challenge Jim Cornette for the top.

Bill - Jim Cornette. Yeah, well, he's still Jimmy C, right? Missy Hyatt is second for two reasons, plain and simple. At least she's worth looking at; this has been the worst year for managers in memory. I mean, when the competition is Downtown Harvey, Paul Borer, Col. Stud, and Scotty Polo, sheesh, even Fuji is in contention. Paul E. Dangerously comes in third. I didn't see much of him, but he's always one of the three best in the business. You can count on it.

Paul - Jim Cornette. Year in year out, Cornette generates heat and entertains with tremendous interviews and the ability to pull off an angle effectively. With Paul E. Dangerously disappearing into the world of promoting, Cornette has no peer. Missy Hyatt gets second place. Her role is to generate heat and she does so in several ways. She is able to keep the attention of the Nasty Boys when they need to rest, fights with the crowd, and remains one of the most attractive and well calculated ladies in wrestling. Don't be fooled, she knows what she is doing and does her job well. In third place, Luna Vachon. Anyone who has had the pleasure of sitting ringside while Vachon does her schtick knows why she's in my top three. She gets in the crowd's face, distracts from a lethargic Bam Bam Bigelow and is very entreating. A job as well done as the road kill people think she eats for dinner.

Awe Inspiring Wrestler Of The Year

David - Shawn Michaels. He is wrestling's all-around performer and a future world champion. Ric Flair, who finishes second, did not have his greatest year, nor did he work an entire 12 months, but he's still one of the best. In third, Too Cold Scorpio who is fun to watch in the ring. He is constantly coming up with creative and innovative moves. If all goes well, he will be a franchise wrestler in a few years.

Michael - Jushin Liger. What can I state about Liger that hasn't already been

printed? Maybe my jaw doesn't hit the floor during his matches any longer from seeing him so often on tape, but he can still cause me to shake my head in amazement. If you know anyone who laughs at the idea that pro wrestlers can be as exciting and as graceful as NBA players, tie them to chair and make them watch a few matches involving Liger. Probably only the Japanese could have conceived second place finisher Bull Nakano. Her frightening appearance coupled with were athletic grace and skill, especially for her size, could not help but inspire awe. A consummate brawler and talented performer that any fan should see. In third is Too Cold Scorpio

just for his finishing move that would do an Olympic diver proud, not to mention the rest of his repertoire. How many remember his match with Chris Benoit from the Clash?

Bill - Two guys in Japan and one in Mexico, but the Mexican may have killed himself last week while attempting a Super-Plancha into a Tombstone Piledriver. No one in North America inspired anything resembling awe in me during 1993.

Paul - Jushin Liger. A man who can perform like Liger, year after year, is unquestionably one of the greatest of all

time. He still makes you want to grab the rewind button every time you see him. Second place goes to Chigusa Nagayo. After spending four years away from the ring, she returned with grace by not only having excellent matches, but looking better than 90 percent of the wrestlers in the United States in the process. Her grace and poise, combined with her skill and style are examples by which all should be judged. Shawn Michaels, the best wrestler in the United States, gets third place for his excellent performances all year. A tremendous athlete. If he is once again paired with a pretty female valet, he could become the next WWF champion.

In Perspective: Don "The Spoiler" Jardine

In the third and final part of this interview with Don Jardine, he discusses the finer points of being a wrestler, the art of interviewing, working in Japan, and some of the wrestlers who made an impact on him.

Wrestling Perspective: Who uses good psychology in the ring today?

DJ: There aren't too many around because the stuff on TV.. you certainly can't tell there. Although I think the Undertaker, he uses good psychology with his character.

WP: How was he to train? Did you think he'd end up where he is?

DJ: He wanted to learn. The story I heard was he wanted to wrestle and said, "I'd like to do some different stuff." "See the Spoiler over there, go over and learn the basics of what he does." And he did it. I taught him a few things and he came to my matches and he learned.

WP: So you taught him the rope walk?

DJ: Yeah. When you've never been in the business and you try to tell these guys, these young kids, and try to tell some of the

old timers that I see in the gym about direction, and there's several of them, I say to them, "What are you going to do in two years? What are you going to do in five years? I mean you don't have to sign with me exclusively, but I can help you." I want to make the wrestler an all around wrestler. Like I tell them, look if I'm a fan and I hear about someone, with the exception of Hulk Hogan, in a shopping mall signing autographs and I go to the mall, big deal. I would rather see a Tony Atlas. If I were to go to the mall and I saw this big black guy about 300 pounds and big 25 inch arms and a 22 inch neck, big chest and I see him there sketching and painting, I'm going to say, "God what the hell is he doing?" When I walk around the front and see him, "Jeez, that's Tony Atlas and he's actually an artist?" What does that do to my impression of a wrestler? It lets me know he's not brain dead. That's what I try to do. I try to make him an all around person. Public speaking: What can you talk about? Can you talk for 15 minutes about your kids or what can you talk about? Fishing? Baseball? We all like to do something.

Somebody comes to town - say a convention comes to town - wrestling gets you through the door, but you have to have something else. "A wrestler? What can he do? I don't want him smashing up my place." "He's going to be a guest speaker." "That musclehead? All the can do is holler and scream on TV." Well he's an intelligent guy." "Oh really?"

WP: So if you have a Nick Bockwinkel or an Arn Anderson who is articulate, it helps the business as a whole because of their presentations skills.

DJ: It makes it more legitimate. What do they call Lex Luger?

WP: The total package.

DJ: The total package. Well that's what I what I try to tell the wrestlers. I want you to be a total package. So you can do other things. Put it on your resume. Put down your hobbies. I do a lot of things. I write short stories. I'm writing a novel now. I've written several poems. I do a lot of things besides work out. Each individual has something good. When I talk to them, I ask

"What can you talk about, besides wrestling, for 10 minutes expertly or professionally?" Because you're a public speaker. You speak whether you're a novice or in the business for 10 or 20 years. Give me 10 minutes on a topic without stuttering or stammering.

WP: Public speaking in general is difficult.

DJ: Certainly. Talking in front of an audience or TV is hard. When I was in Charlotte, on Tuesdays, we'd do 40 or 50 different interviews; 30 seconds, one minute and two minutes. We'd be there for five or six hours doing interviews. They'd say "OK, you've got to go and give 10 interviews. You're wrestling so and so and we need to draw some money." I've got 1:45 to say whatever I've got to say and I've got to do it intelligently. If I don't and I come across as some musclehead idiot, the promoters and bookers and people in power say, "You're a great wrestler, but you can't talk. We've got to get you a manager." So that cuts down on your payoff. So you've got to have little something special. You've got to come up with all these ideas and thoughts and make it interesting. My interviews, I always tried to make them interesting by quoting famous people or situations around the world. If I was wrestling an Indian, I'd try to quote some situation, or something back in history. I liked history and geography, so I put them in my interviews. The people would say that's different and I'd say at the end I'm wrestling Chief Strongbow or Wahoo McDaniel in the Battle of 1876. You remember that. It's going to be the same way, only a different outcome.

WP: Why did you decide to you use the mask?

DJ: I've kind of been a solitary person my whole life. I felt the mask would give me a little privacy. You couldn't walk down the street without someone screaming and hollering and calling you names. You'd go to the theater, shopping mall, somebody would call you an old S.O.B. So you're there with your family or friends and it's embarrassing. It was a way to make a buck

and I liked it. I wasn't going to do it all the time. I just tried the gimmick to see how it turned out. Wearing a mask is very difficult. It's like you're a bank robber all the time, hiding. I used to have an apartment and people would say "I'd like to have your job. What do you do." I'm in the mind business." "The mind business?" "Yes I mind my own business." So that shut them up. I'm sure people thought I was a bank robber. But I really enjoyed the mask. It's hard to see because your vision's cut off and your breathing, it's hot.

WP: Did you find that not being able to use facial expressions was a hindrance.

DJ: Not really. I thought about it, but it wasn't really important.

WP: Who were some of the other great masked wrestlers in your opinion?

DJ: Of course I wrestled as the Super Destroyer. I used to go back and forth between the Super Destroyer and the Spoiler. The Destroyer was a great wrestler, although he liked to carry his mask in his back pocket and let everybody know who he was. One time he was in Las Vegas in 1963, he had his mask in his back pocket in a pair of shorts in the pool. "I'm the Destroyer." It kind of defeated the purpose of the mask.

WP: When you worked as the Super Destroyer did you work with Scott Irwin?

DJ: No. I wrestled as the Super Destroyer in '73 and '74 in Charlotte then in 1977 and part of '78. In wrestled in Minneapolis as the Super Destroyer and I also worked in Japan.

WP: So the other Super Destroyer was Irwin.

DJ: A lot of people wrestled as the Super Destroyer. I should have trademarked it. Mil Mascaras was a great masked wrestlers. He just had a different attitude when he went into the ring. I used to go to Japan with him. He wanted to do all this Mexican style and we were working strictly American style. We'd be in the match and he'd have his spots and I had mine and he

wouldn't go along with it. He was really uncooperative.

WP: This summer Black Bart wrestled him in Dallas and Mascaras wouldn't sell at all for him, even though Bart was the top heel in the town. Was he like that then?

DJ: Exactly. If you didn't do his style, his kind of match, he wouldn't cooperate. That's basically the way most of them were in the southern Texas area. If you beat them you had to be very careful, working with Blacks or Mexicans - once you beat them, or the program was over and they got beat, they wouldn't do business. Bearcat Wright, he could get over faster than any other wrestler. He was in two weeks and it was strong money. But he was very difficult to work with. After he got over, he wanted the power. Thunderbolt Patterson was basically the same way. You'd kind of coddle him along, baby him because he could only go so far. I don't want to get racists, but that's the way the business was. Everybody knows it.

WP: People didn't beat Pedro Morales for fear of riots when he was WWWF champion.

DJ: Well, I don't know. When I wrestled him, I never did beat him, I had good matches with him. He beat me, but we were making money and I didn't care. I got along good with him. I saw him in Los Angeles and in Minneapolis. In Minneapolis he was very cooperative. Of course he was a millionaire by then. You're very cooperative when you have money. You're very nice. You see very rich people, they're always very pleasant.

WP: Other than the Undertaker, who else has/had good psychology?

DJ: Ric Flair. Larry Hennig. Randy Savage. Bret Hart. Even Hogan. He wouldn't be where he is in the business without great psychology. You can't really tell on TV. Part of it is how it looks. You have to make it look real.

WP: Is that one of the reasons why you worked stiff?

DJ: Sure. If I hit a guy, I hit him. I told him

to do the same thing to me. With Wahoo, Johnny Valentine, if you didn't hit them back, they didn't respect you. They didn't give a damn. They'd beat the hell out of you. They'd beat you with a chair and you better protect yourself because it's coming down. When Valentine hit you, you felt it. He liked to be hit anyway.

WP: What would you say makes a good wrestler?

DJ: The right attitude. I think if you don't have the right attitude, the right frame of mind, you don't get it done. That and a sense of humor. If you don't have a sense of humor with your job... you can have all the skills in the world, if you don't have the right attitude, you won't be successful.

WP: Has wrestling been good to you?

DJ: I had a terrific career. I made money. I saved a few dollars. I really enjoyed. I had a lot of good times. I can look back on it and reflect on it at different times and in different situations. I met different people. I wrestled in front of the Shah of Iran. I've wrestled in many different countries. I've seen different cultures, people. Where else can you do that and get paid? Of course you meet some assholes, but for every asshole, you meet a lot of nice people. It's been good to me. I enjoyed it. It's very tough. It was difficult. It's a very complex business. But I always felt I tried to push the promoters. The promoters, a lot of them were not interested in using you properly. They didn't want you to get too big and take their positions away from them.

WP: Did you every book a territory.

DJ: No, I never did. The only thing I ever booked was myself. I gave a lot ideas to the booking office. My ideas. I planned my life for 20, 25 years to go to as many territories as I could, as fast as I could and make as much money as I could. Like I said, I wasn't homesteading. I did my program and went on. That way it kept me fresh. I looked forward to going in, getting over, getting out and going to another territory and wrestling different people,

different styles, different faces. You learn a lot as you go along. When I was a kid I used to listen to the old timers and I didn't understand them until 10 to 15 years later. A lot of the wrestlers would never stick around and ask the old timers advice, but I always did. I got their advice. What should I do? Should I change my style? How do I approach people and talk to them and they would tell me.

WP: Are there any young wrestlers that are genuinely interested in learning the business?

DJ: Well, to be perfectly honest, I'm not around a lot. I see a lot of guys around here, but just trying to get pictures and resumes... I tell them that's the bottom line. Professionally done wrestling photos and videos so I can have it on file so if anybody calls from Japan. "Send me a picture. What does so and so do? Send me a video." So that's what I do. They all want to get booked, but they don't want to spend money on the business. Even today, I have a stack of pictures that are up to date and stacks of publicity. They don't have any publicity. Even the guys who have been in the business for 10 or 15 years don't even know how to fill out a resume. A basic wrestling resume: what you've done, what's your favorite hold, do you have any hobbies, what's you're ambition, biggest match, where would you like to be in five years?

WP: It has to be harder to market yourself today than 20 years ago.

DJ: Yes. All you needed then was to keep your publicity, have lots of pictures and when you were going to another office, two to six months beforehand you sent all the stuff in. Of course we didn't have video then. In later years, I had a 3/4" tape made for \$1,000 and I used to send that to the promoters. One time I went to Japan and on the way, I dropped it off in Los Angeles. When I came back I was already over because the people had seen me for six weeks in different matches when I came in, in Australia, New Zealand. In the long run it was worth it because it cut my time in getting over down and the promoters liked

it.

WP: How did you enjoy Japan? Who did you work for?

DJ: I worked for all of them, Baba, Inoki. There were really two offices until 1980. Baba was probably the easiest in that I worked with him when he first came to the states in the early sixties in Los Angeles. Inoki of course was trained by Gotch, so he wanted to work the shoot style, which is harder when you're doing it seven nights a week. Years ago, we used to do 12 week tours of Japan and didn't have any days off. If we did, it was spent traveling.

WP: Were the payoffs good at that time?

DJ: Compared to the rest they were. After about three weeks you're just drained out. They demand a lot of you. It's a lot of traveling and it's draining. When you're up at six in the morning, traveling on the bus all day, you get to the arena by 6:00pm, the matches start at 7:00 and you don't go on until 9:00 or 9:30. At that time all the Japanese wrestlers were underneath. A lot of times there wouldn't be any heat in the dressing room in the middle of winter and you'd be freezing for two or three hours. They'd have a stove in there but that was it. They had matches in the middle of rainstorms and the people would sit in the middle of the rainstorm. Eventually they would have to call it off. Those days, the biggest spot was hitting some one in the groin. That was the most reaction you got. They weren't surprised, they just smiled. Everybody laughed. Consequently, everybody was hitting each other below the belt. Otherwise the audience just sat on their hands. They weren't as sophisticated with catch as catch can wrestling. Of course now they've surpassed the U.S. in wrestling. They're more sophisticated in everything. The tapes and the moves are just unbelievable. They've far surpassed the U.S in wrestling just like in everything else.

WP: What are your future plans?

DJ: I'd like to bring wrestling back. I don't want to say where it was, but I want to bring

it into the 21st century if I can. At least I want to help. I don't know if I'll be successful or not. I'm going to be positive about it and the few shows I'm running are family entertainment where people won't be offended when they come to the matches. They're going to see wrestling. That's what the marquee says up there. That's what we're selling. Wrestling, not popcorn, as Paul Boesch used to say. I'd like to continue with my booking office. It's very difficult right now booking the wrestlers because there aren't any places for them to go. I can't send them anywhere because nobody wants to pay them anything with the exception of Japan and they have a very closed market with their own bookers. I'd like to continue by teaching wrestling, at least teaching my philosophy about it which is quality. Put out quality work and getting paid as a professional and having the right attitude. I have a fan club and I also sell merchandise; tapes, T-Shirts, posters. Basically, that's about it. It's a long hard road to be involved in wrestling right now. It's going to get worse. The big organizations aren't drawing anything. They have to get new blood, new talent. Some of the old brains that are in power now haven't changes their attitude because they're doing what they did in the forties, fifties and sixties and it's not working. They have to change along with technology

WP: Dusty Rhodes is using the same finishes that drove the NWA out of business.

DJ: Yeah. I mean you see the same thing on TV. You can't go out there and take a star and put him in the ring with a nobody every week. You have to have some competitive spirit, some competition. I mean do you see that in baseball, football or basketball? If they were to do that on TV, they'd be out of business tomorrow. So why not take two big stars and have a match and have a finish instead of the same old stupid things that they do; the DQ, the countout. You talk to people and they already know how the match is going to end with a big star. When it's predetermined by the people, they're losing the edge. I think the edge has already been lost. It's

going to take a long time come back. Ten years ago they had 25 to 30 major promotions and half a dozen smaller ones. Wrestling had some credibility. But it has no credibility at all today. When I talk to people, I don't tell them I'm a wrestler. That's how ashamed I am. I don't want to get insulted. It's a great business. It's part of our culture, just like rock and roll is, wrestling is a part of our culture. A lot of important people were in it, watched it and took part in it. It made a lot of impressions, but you have to treat it as a business, not treat it as a circus. If I want to see a circus, I'll go see a circus.

WP: Some of my best memories are from wrestling, but there's a certain special edge that seems lost today.

DJ: When I talk to young wrestlers, they just want to know if they can sell their pictures because they can make more money selling their pictures than they can wrestling. Wrestling is a very fragile business. It's very unique. It has to be coddled. Otherwise, were going to lose it. Well I think we've already lost it. Probably in the rest of my life I don't see it coming back. The regional territories that it is. It's just too expensive to run it.

WP: As long as there is a Turner or McMahon do you think the regionals are through.

DJ: I think definitely. There's only one way that could work. That's if these two organizations were to have satellite operations like one in Florida, one in Charlotte, one in Georgia, one in Minneapolis and what they do is have a major office in say Tampa. Have the major stars, like they used to back in the fifties come in for the TV and work say the top matches, but have the other wrestlers from the area fill in the underneath card. That way you can keep a lot of underneath wrestlers busy, you can keep a lot of different regional territories going, you can keep a major territory that you have going say in Atlanta or New York and the business will go on. If I'm in Atlanta and I've got Rick Rude, I'll send him to

Minneapolis for two weeks and he works all around. You either bring in a star with him or have him work with the local talent in the territory. The next week he's in Florida and once in a while you take the underneath territory wrestler and put him on national television which will help the territory's day to day business. That way you can do it.

WP: So basically a national office with regional satellites.

DJ: Yes, that's right. That's the way they actually used to do it in the fifties in Chicago with Mick Koehler. He sent all his talent all around the territories. Eventually it killed him because his talent got overexposed. I think it won't happen because nobody seems to want to cooperate. You help me, I'll help you. It's just so disorganized it's ridiculous. People don't want to cooperate on any level whatsoever. Form the wrestlers to the booker to the promoter. "I'm getting mine, and to hell with everybody else. I don't want the business to go on, I want to make my money and go on." That's the attitude. Maybe it could work with the old studio system Hollywood used where TV actors and movie actors could do their medium. I always felt wrestling was a studio system.

WP: There was cooperation back then.

DJ: That's right, because of the monopolies they had to work with each other. The antitrust laws the way they are they had to work, cooperate and use each other's stars and each other's talent. I don't see that at all, even on a small scale basis down here. I talk to promoters around the country and there's nothing. They call me up for talent information. They want everything for nothing. They don't want to pay for it. It cost me a lot of money to get this information. "Well can't you get me so and so's number?" "No, I can't." I wouldn't want to give the Ultimate Warrior's home phone number, which I have, to a lot of these independent promoters when I really don't know who they are and that's the way it is today. No cooperation on any level, which is a shame because I love this

business. I gave my life to it. To see it end up this way is very depressing.

WP: It's going to get worse before it gets better.

DJ: Oh you haven't seen anything. It's going to be like the thirties. I think it will actually disappear completely for a number of years. Maybe it will come back. If just in tent shows, carnival shows. It will start all over again. That's the way it's going to be until people change their attitude. So I try. But it's hard. I try to do my own thing, put out quality work and make sure the guys get paid.

WP: Were payoffs a problem throughout your career?

DJ: They've always been a big problem. That's one of the major factors in the business. Because you never get the right story. I always felt that I had a certain amount of intelligence to draw money in a very short time. It was a very unique talent and few had that. If I took my talent and my ideas and projected them on television and the promoter drew more money than he previously had, I should get paid accordingly. To me I found that to be a very unique talent to take something as complex as we have and within the time frame and time limit to do it in and do everything more or less on an ad-lib basis as far as the interviews were concerned and do it right and not take 10 different takes, which they didn't have the time or money to do, that was special. The money was a problem. If you were to complain, they'd say you have a bad attitude, ship you to Japan or another territory. We don't have a pension plan, a health plan, a union. We have absolutely nothing. You put 25 to 30 years in the business and the promoters are driving around in their Cadillacs and we're driving around in Chevys. That's basically what we said. When we tried to get a union we were blackballed. "Well you're on top now. I don't think you should go to that meeting. If you do, I won't be able to use you. Think about it. You've got a family. You've got to pay bills." You say OK. It's a very hard decision to make, although I

was kind of hardheaded. I got fired a lot of times for my opinions. But I thought the boys should have been treated better. After all, I always thought we were like high priced executives. We were producing the product. It was good product. At least with the guys that were on top. I worked for years seven nights a week, with double shots on Saturdays and Sundays and put out a quality product. At least we should have been compensated with something. At least a pension plan, a health plan. At least a life insurance policy for the family in case he gets killed somewhere. If you don't like it you've got a bad attitude. So you'll get the attitude after a while.

WP: What do you think of guaranteed contracts?

DJ: I think they're good in one way. At least the money is guaranteed if you're a professional and you perform accordingly, you should get paid accordingly. That's the way it should be written in the contract. I don't think you should get paid just because you are somebody. If you get hurt, just like in football, you should be paid according to what you do. With a guarantee if you do so and so and such and such within a period of time you would be paid as follows. If you don't, we're going to give you the standard fee. A lot of it works against wrestlers because they get a big head. Let's face it, if you give somebody \$200,000 to \$300,000 and they've only been in the business for five years they'll get a big head a lot of times and they're not going to show up or be in the right shape they should be in and give you 100 percent like they should. But I think it's good for the boys. I don't know whether they can keep on paying it. The biggest thing is insurance/disability. You can't get insurance. I've got health insurance and it states right in there if you're in the ring, on the way to or the way back, they won't pay it. There aren't many options.

WP: Other than Lloyds of London, which has worked well in a couple cases.

DJ: Yes (laughs), yes it has. It certainly

has. When I hear what some of them got (laughs). It used to take 20 years to make what these guys make in a year. Some of the money they make Whooo, God. I hope they save it. That's all I can say.

WP: One final question. Did you ever wrestle any of the Funks?

DJ: Yes I worked with all of them. Terry, I worked with Terry his first few matches when he started out.

WP: Did he show the potential back then?

DJ: Oh yeah. Terry was crazy. Junior, he was kind of the technician. I had great matches with all of them. When they became champions it was no surprise. Terry was just different and grew up in the business with his old man. I wrestled him too. There was a guy that had a great brain, like Eddie Graham. You don't have anymore Eddie Grahams. You can say what you want about him, but one thing he did, he did protect the business. He didn't expose it. He had a great mind for the business and old man Funk was another one. He had a lot of bizarre ideas and everything, but he drew money because he presented wrestling and it was logical. But you don't have any more great bookers and brains like that anymore in the business. You may have 10,000 wrestlers, but you can count on one hand the number of bookers who had great ideas that could run a territory from week to week to week. Wrestling is repetitious by nature, so why not have these big matches and put them on TV and create some interest? Then you can go to the house shows and continue there and say "I've wrestled this guy 20 times, he beat me 10 times, I beat him 5 and we've got five draws. Let's continue this feud." If you put out quality product and people pay to see it, they'll keep paying more money to see it.

WP: I want to thank you for your time.

DJ: I appreciate you giving me the time to get my opinions over. I enjoyed it.

Sidelines

Thanks To Sheldon Goldberg, Glen Radford and Georgiann Makropoulos for their kind plugs.

Coming Up In Wrestling Perspective? • Good stuff of course. Professional wrestler, painter and author of *I Was A Teenage Professional Wrestler*, Ted Lewin (yes, the brother on Donn and Maniac Mark) will be featured in a wonderful, intriguing interview. Smoky Mountain Wrestling General Manager Sandy Scott joins us for an interview and we're working on much more. It doesn't stop there, as we will be featuring the best analysis and commentary from the Phantom of the Ring, Bill "Potshot" Kunkel, Michael McGowen, David Skolnick and Paul MacArthur. Of course, there's more, so stay tuned.

Next Issue features an interview with former WWF and AWA Ladies Champion "Sensational" Sherri Martel

Wrestling Chatterbox is a monthly newsletter featuring news, commentary and contests. The newsletter, published by Georgiann Makropoulos is available for \$2.50 per issues at 23-44 30th Drive, Astoria, NY 11102-3252.

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A Different Perspective - By Rodney Leighton

Has Society Passed Pro Wrestling By?

Rodney Leighton is no stranger to the wrestling newsletter world or to readers of Wrestling Perspective. A prolific writer, Leighton has contributed to several newsletters and even ran a few of his own over the years. Leighton first appeared in Wrestling Perspective in Issue #3, and since then has contributed several articles with his unique insight and outspoken style. We hope you enjoy.

A recent issue of this publication led off with an article by Michael McGowen who casually mentioned that he censors his children's wrestling viewing to the extent of hiding his tapes of Smoky Mountain

Wrestling. The recent UWFI pay-per-view led off with the sort of announcement one usually associates with a movie containing about the same amount of bare female mammary glands as an ECW major show or half as much swearing as a Jim Cornette interview. In a fit of boredom, I turned on the only television wrestling program available to me, for the third time in four years, which happened to be WWF Wrestling Calvacade. To my great shock, it opened with an announcement: the following exhibitions contains some scenes which may be offensive to some viewers. Viewer discretion is advised.

My shock at this may be merely due to never watching any TV wrestling. It may be as commonplace these days as social scientists writing in independent wrestling publications about the ills of professional wrestling. Many newsletter and the people who write letters to them, have a great love affair with words ending in ism, ist, ia and ic. This is an ill of society in general today. People are no longer fat, deaf, dumb or retarded, but horizontally, hearing, speaking and mentally challenged. Anyone unwise enough to use a term like "nigger," "Jap," "broad" or "bitch" is immediately denounced as a racist misogynist. This

culminated for me several months ago when *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* printed a letter one week blasting Bill Watts and using the term "Jap," written by well-known wrestling newsletter writer Vic Stanley. It was followed the next week by a letter from someone blasting Stanley for being a racist. By definition, if Stanley is a Japanese racist, he must hate all things Japanese. I consider Stanley a good friend of mine; if I know him fairly well. I feel 100 percent confident in stating he doesn't not hate himself nor his mother nor his maternal grandparents, which, considering the last three are Japanese and, therefore, Stanley is himself, half Japanese, it follows that there is no way Stanley can be a racist. Stanley would not be concerned with me calling him a half "Jap," but if it appears in print like that, I wonder how many people will decide that I hate not only Japanese people, but Stanley as well?

I raise this point not to ridicule anyone - I was infuriated at the time, but later found it hilarious in its pure ridiculousness - nor to point out the absurdity of some of the things printed in various wrestling publications, but to illustrate what the world has come to.

Some people have a tendency to forget that professional wrestling is based on "good guy" versus "bad guy." I grant that it is extremely easy to forget, given the pap presented by many promotions and the tendency of promotions in the past few years to "turn" people from "bad guy" to "good guy" without the benefit of any change in character or actions. As I asked a couple of years ago in this publication: "Where have all the heroes gone?" However, the fact of the matter is that virtually all professional wrestling is based on some people being villains and other people being heroes and gaining retribution from the villains for heinous acts or statements made against them, their friends,

family or members of the same nation, country, race or religious order. Certainly there are a few exceptions and it is entirely possible to have an excellent match or even an entire card with no "hatred" involved. But it is a very rare thing.

All Japan, New Japan and All Japan Women probably come the closest to the ideal of top notch wrestling shows with no words ending in "ism." Yet, even these promotions have matched involving "unbeatable, hated foreigners" and AJW has Bull Nakano and Aja Kong; heels in anyone's book. Throughout North America, pro wrestling has, for as long as I can remember, been based on certain wrestlers and, more importantly, the vast majority of fans, having a desire to beat the living daylights out of the "bad guys" all because these guys are abusers of women, anti-American, dirty, sneaking, deceitful Japs, Commies or merely low-down skunks.

A lot of people today hate such thing, including people who proclaim themselves to be wrestling fans. Wrestling promotions have, to a large extent, moderated or curtailed all angles involving such things, with exceptions of course, like the USWA. Possibly, it is simply due to the well-documented incompetence of the people at the top. But I wonder, might it be due to "political correctness?" Are wrestling promotions operating in fear of the supposedly non-existent but too often highly visible thought police? Or have the majority of people really become lovers of all races, creeds and colors?

Of course there is another aspect to all of this: violence. In spite of the fact that there is and always has been violence in various sectors of society, a great many people of late have been expressing concern about the portrayal of violence on television and elsewhere. Never mind that the average newscast contains much more violence,

bloodshed and horror than any wrestling program has ever dreamed of. Some smaller promotions, SMW among them, do still get fairly violent at times, which is likely the reason that my compatriot hides those tapes from his children. However, there is a major conundrum for some of us in this: if wrestling is too violent, why do some of us wonder if part of the reason for the decline in popularity is the inability of fans to suspend their disbelief? I recently viewed a tape of Halloween Havoc. At one point, Vader and Cactus Jack went over the safety rail and into the crowd. No one moved. With those two supposed maniacs brawling amongst them, the viewers remained in their seats. I was amazed. There is something dreadfully wrong when two large men brawl into a crowd and no one moves. People should have been scattering like leaves in a hurricane. Have people gone crazy? Or is it simply that the product is so bad that no one can believe it? Or, maybe, the only people who go to WCW shows are all "smart" and know they won't get hurt, although it's pretty stupid not to move in case of a missed move or an accidental bump. However, my point here is that pro wrestling, by definition and by its very nature, is violent. If you remove the violence, you have amateur wrestling or squash matches and even some of those are fairly rough.

Perhaps society has reached a point that pro wrestling has no place in. I now sound like one of those "social scientists" I derided earlier in this column.

Yet, I continue to wonder. For pro wrestling to survive into the 21st century, must the promotions remove all vestiges of violence, hatred and any aspect which a vocal minority deems unacceptable or politically incorrect? If so, will there remain any semblance to pro wrestling as we long time fans know it? Will pro wrestling survive?

Readers who would like to become guest writers through 'A Different Perspective' are encouraged to order the *Wrestling Perspective Submission Manual*, which is free and the first step to becoming a contributor to *Wrestling Perspective*. Drop us a note and we'll send you a copy. It's that simple.

Letters To The Editors

I've been feeling sorry for you guys lately. Your slanted opinion of Vader is causing you to miss out on the only true superstar, outside of Bret Hart, left performing in the United States. Are you sure you haven't got him mixed up with the One Man Gang? Vader is not only the greatest big man in the history of wrestling, he's the best worker in the U.S. today. Only Hart can compare with him and Vader outweighs him by 150 pounds. Vader has headlined in New Japan, Mexico, Germany, WCW and now the UWFI. He has gotten over in a company that is run by fools. He hasn't had a bad match in a year and a half. Everything else on pay-per-view stinks; his matches are classics. Further, who are all these wrestlers who are supposedly carrying him? Nikita Koloff, Davey Boy Smith, and Sting? I remember the Barbarian and Tony Atlas too. Jushin Liger could not have a three star match against Koloff or even Sting, so who's the better worker? Was it in April that you wrote that piece, because it was so off that it seems like one of those April Fools jokes that Dave did in the *Observer*. Sorry, but Vader is my favorite wrestler of the nineties and other people must think well of him since he's the highest paid performer in the world. Maybe you were watching films of King Kong Bundy and got mixed up.

I remember you dumping on Stan Hansen in the article also. What Hansen is doing in Japan right now is unbelievable. When historians rate the best careers from the U.S. over the last 15 years, they say Flair is first followed by Hansen second. To dump on Hansen makes me think your not watching you're Japanese videos with your glasses on. All that violence gets you

down, eh?

Sorry, but these guys are great and deserve better. Hey, you got a reaction out of me.

Steve Yohe
Montebello, CA

Pe&D - The article "Big Van Vader: Bully Of The Woods" was anything but an April Fools joke. Through reckless disregard for his fellow wrestlers well being, Vader, much like Stan Hansen, is injuring opponents and putting their careers in jeopardy. That ought not to be lauded, but condemned. If the new standard of excellence in professional wrestling is determined by how many bones one breaks and how many careers one ends, it is one standard to which we refuse to subscribe.

I like Steve Yohe's idea about the Yokozuna, which seems like fun. That's something needed in this stressful world filled with pathetic wrestling and God only knows how many newsletters analyzing every nuance to the point of nausea. For me, personally, I don't believe anyone can rate a wrestler that he or she hasn't had some sort of personal experience, or at least lived while he was active. How does Yohe know whether Jim Londos was good, bad or indifferent? Or any of those guys? But as far as more modern day warriors are concerned: Vader will never make it in my book simply due to the fact that the man is too clumsy, too insensitive to others and simply nowhere as good as many of the hardcore fans proclaim him to be. Deliberately hurting an opponent is one thing. hurting an opponent due to lack of ability or lack of concern seriously detracts from any wrestler's greatness. Much of the credibility of Ric Flair has been destroyed

though crappy booking and an stale act. I give Flair credit for changing his act in the twilight of his career, but whether Flair nuts want to admit it or not, Flair wrestled the same basic match for something like 16 straight years, except for a few exceptional runs. I had this argument with Yohe one time and he sent me a tape with the series of three or four matches Flair had with Ricky Steamboat in 1989. They were fantastic, exciting matches, no question. But, I called every spot at least a minute before they did it. I consider a Flair vs. Leo Burke match to be the second best live match I've ever seen. But I've also seen Flair in a live match which was *1/4 at best. Of course, he had to work with Hawk, which would drag anyone down.

Being a pro wrestling grand champion would necessitate doing what was best for the company and/or the business. Thus, Brusier Brody is eliminated. He wasn't any good anyway. I don't think Hansen fits either. You have to be willing to do the job when necessary.

My list: Edouard Carpentier, Terry Funk, Dory Funk Jr., Don Leo Jonathan, Buddy Rogers, Lou Thesz, John Tolos, Harley Race and Whipper Billy Watson.

Rodney Leighton
Pugwash, Nova Scotia

Paul - What, no "Mr. USA" Tony Atlas???

David - No Dusty? He's going to have to come out of retirement this year to prove you wrong. How does a "Funky Like a Monkey, Takin' Care of Business, Slam That Sucker Down, American Dream 1994 Tour" grab you?

The Letters To The Editors section is an irregular feature in Wrestling Perspective. Interested readers who wish to write letters are encouraged to contribute so that this might one day become a regular feature. Then again, maybe not. We are currently encouraging everyone to contribute their thoughts as to who the true Yokozuna of professional wrestling is. For those who are curious, The Phantom is working on his own Yokozuna article as well.

The Phantom Of The Ring's Annual Phannie Awards

Yes, sleaze lovers, it's that time of the year again. When I was at the Forum, every year at this time I handed out the Phannies, which, simply put, are awards given to those who either did the least with the most, or even less with the least. So sit back in your easy chair, laugh, cry, enjoy yourself. After you're done, you can read this column.

Worst Promotion - The landslide winner this year is Ted Turner's WCW, which in the last few years went from being a major threat to Vince McMahon's egomaniac empire to just another bad minor-league wrestling promotion. What makes this all the more astounding is the fact that WCW is owned by the Turner organization, which has a record of turning everything it touches into gold. So much for the Midas touch. WCW has lost name wrestlers (the Steiners) to the WWF, and imported nothing but has-beens (Ric Flair, Road Warrior Hawk) and never-weres (Awesome Kongs, Steve Regal). If it takes talent to so thoroughly destroy a promotion, the WCW bunch are pure geniuses.

Worst Champion - Hulk Hogan. Wrestling was almost becoming fun to watch again after he retired. But lo, the film career is going down the flusher and he decided to return. He is abetted in this conspiracy to ruin my enjoyment by the equally oily Vince McMahon, who desperately needs a drawing card. They bring in Brutus Beefcake (who needs a job to repay salary advances) and Jimmy Hart (who, I believe, was once a wrestling manager) as faithful toadies. At Wrestlemania, Hogan destroys newly crowned champion, Yokozuna, in something like 25 seconds (neither can really work any longer than that) and becomes the most apathetic champion in the history of the WWF. He then drops the title back to Yokozuna a few months later, defending his title a grand number of zero

times. Meanwhile, he wanders to Japan and is given a non-title win over the IWGP champion as a reward. With thinking like this, no wonder Japan is in a recession. In the meantime, he leaves behind a series of performances that can best be described as lackluster. Rumors have him wrestling for WCW in 1994. They deserve each other. By the way, did anyone see Mr. Nanny?

Worst Tag Team - 1) Hogan and Beefcake. Enough said. 2) Men on a Mission. I don't know what their mission is, but it doesn't include wrestling. 3) The "Awesome" Kongs. Watching them is like having your tooth pulled without anesthetic.

Worst Wrestler - Ric Flair. Watch Flair as he dances toward retirement with the most predictable choreography since Baron Scicluna. I could close my eyes and call the entire match. Come to think of it, I saw tapes of Flair wrestling in the fifties. Back then he was known as Buddy Rogers. Watch for yourselves and see if you don't agree. Every move, every bump Rogers took is mirrored almost to perfection by Flair. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Rogers was flattered to death. Nota Bene: Yokozuna, Bastion Booger and Giant Gonzales do not qualify for this award as they are not really wrestlers.

Worst Jobber - Owen Hart. Imagine being one of the most heralded wrestlers to enter the game in years. Now imagine working the openers of cards only a few years later. Has he been getting his career advice from Sally Struthers?

Worst Heel - Giant Gonzales, who changed his moniker from El Gigante (Spanish for "Big Stiff"). This guy was about as ferocious as a kitten.

Worst Announcer - Jim Ross. This shrill shrill has been overrated by fans for years simply because the competition has been the likes of Vince McMahon, Gene Okerlund and Gorilla Monsoon. But given time, Ross' limitations are all the more glaring. You're no Bob Costas, Jim.

Worst Color Commentary - Randy Savage. Oooh, yeah! The Worst! Can't speak! No! You know, the voice! Needs Ex-Lax! Yeah!

Worst Clown - Vince McMahon. You thought I was going to say Doink, didn't you?

Worst Change of Character - Lex Luger. He goes from being the hated Narcissist one day to body slamming Yokozuna on a boat the next as America's hero. Doesn't anyone spend time building up story lines anymore?

Worst Trunks - Giant Gonzales and his body suit. That thing seemed to have been put on him to give the impression that he had a body. Another reason why his trunks were the worst was that he was in them.

Worst Debut - The Shockmaster. Even Stevie Wonder could see who that was entering the ring.

Worst Return To The Ring - Bob Backlund. As time went by and memories diminished, Backlund's legend grew. Then Backlund had to return and spoil everything. Not that he was that bad, it's just that his character is out of touch. Backlund belongs in the late fifties-early sixties, when wrestling was actually practiced. Today, he only sticks out as a pathetic antique.

Worst Impression of Fabio - The Ultimate

Warrior. Did you get a peak at that poster of himself he's hawking? A co-worker bought one at his kids' urging and brought it in for me to look at. Unbelievable.

Worst Impression of Stuart Smalley - The Ultimate Warrior. At the bottom of his poster are scribbled some thoughts that read like Desiderata on LSD. Stuff like, "When judgment is made through the eyes of others they will not see the same story." Wow. Remember this Warrior: I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and, doggone it, people like me."

Worst Way To Give Up Smoking - Dino Bravo.

Just Plain Worst - Dusty Rhodes wins the award on general principles. Since Dusty didn't do anything of note this year, I thought I'd get him in here anyway. However, if he wrestles Jody "Assassin" Hamilton, he'll earn a spot in next year's awards.

Worst Stereotype - Papa Shango.

Worst Match - Atsushi Onita and Terry Funk in the "exploding barbed wire ring" match. Boy, that Onita never gives up trying to top Vince McMahon and Kevin Sullivan for bad taste. It's interesting how low Terry Funk's reputation has fallen; also his self-esteem.

Worst Real Match - Sid Vicious vs. Arn Anderson in the "Hotel Room Scissors-Stab" match. Boy, that Sid is something else. He can't even use a weapon effectively. He's lucky it wasn't Brian Pillman he was fighting, or Sid wouldn't have been around to be fired, or whatever Eric Bischoff is doing to him..

The Dusty (Worst Booker) - Who else could win the year with Bill Watts in the running? I ask you, was this guy a walking disaster or what? Within days of his appointment, he proceeded to alienate the wrestlers, the press (or what passes for the press in the wrestling world) and the fans. The world had changed and he was not willing to adapt to cope with it. The main item of importance to him seemed to be pushing his no-talent kid. Forget it, Bill. That died with the Von Erichs. Hopefully, the memory of this disaster will still the voices of hyperbole about Watts the Legend, Watts the Conqueror, Watts the Great. The Mid South promotion was the most overrated promotion in wrestling history. Check out their attendance figures if you don't believe me. Wrestling writers always seemed to be in need of a hero, and it is always enjoyable when their heroes turn out to have the inevitable Feet of Clay. In Watts' case, his whole persona was made of clay.

The Fuji (Worst Manager) - Paul Bearer wins the Fuji for being the worst manager in wrestling. His stupid act combined with that annoying falsetto screech put him at the top of the list of infamy. By the way Paul, you can lose that falsetto if you get some loser fitting underwear. Mr. Fuji almost came from behind to win the award named for him with his relentlessly lackluster performance as Yokozuna's manager. Fuji was so effective in his role that Jim Cornette had to come in and manage him.

Worst Explanation Of The Business: Vince McMahon, who claims his WWF is merely family entertainment. The Manson family or The Addams family, maybe, but not the normal American family.

The Vinnie (Phannie Of The Year) - This year, the ultimate Phannie goes to Ted Turner, politically correct owner of the Atlanta Braves and WCW, husband of politically correct exercise pitch-woman, Jane Fonda, Crayola-wielding cable tycoon, and oxymoronic pipe dreamer nonpareil. Ted's big pipe dream this year was to create a truly international wrestling federation with representatives from all over the world. He can't even manage the wrestling federation he's got. Stick to the Cartoon Channel, Ted. We are not amused.

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